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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) A survey conducted to secure information on conditions affecting migrant children is presented. A five-part questionnaire delineates the number of migrant children in a given state, their participation in regular and summer terms, and needs and problems connected with their classroom attendance. The questionnaire has been sent to departments of education in 48 states, and to church agencies, governors' committees and citizens' committees in ten states.

Few agencies know how many children enter or leave the state, and few keep statistics on school progress. Most respondents recognize that migrant children are retarded, but are unsure of, or indifferent to, the means to improve educational opportunities for this disadvantaged group.

The migrant child is disadvantaged in many ways. Moving from district to district, he is frequently untouched by attendance laws, unwelcomed in the classroom where his presence creates many and difficult problems for the teacher, and ignored by his classmates because of his lack of social awareness comparable to their own. Often Spanish-speaking, he finds few bilingual teachers when he travels and seldom encounters a counselor to encourage or motivate him toward an education. Retarded in grade from two to three years, a retardation increasing with his age, the migrant child becomes an early school dropout. Unprotected by child labor laws, he takes his place beside his parents, working to add to the family income and becoming in time another cipher in health and welfare statistics.

Because of the escalating social, economic, and human costs represented by the uneducated migrant child, ways need to be found quickly to provide him with the basic educational skills necessary in a rapidly changing nation.

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EDUCATION
OF
MIGRANT CHILDREN

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The School and the Migrant Child

A Survey Interpreted

Migrant agricultural workers have been a part of the American scene since the early twenties, and the educational problems of their children have been subject for study and concern for more than a decade. Yet in the spring of 1963, no national program, public or private, existed to facilitate the education of these hapless children, whose parents followed the harvests from state to state. Indeed, even information concerning the actual numbers and educational attainment of migrant children was either lacking or at best contradictory. And despite the fact that migrant children were generally acknowledged to be among America's most educationally deprived youngsters, techniques for meeting their special problems and needs were few and little known.

In an effort to clarify the educational picture and to secure reliable information on a national scale, the newly-formed National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children launched in July 1963 a survey of the actual conditions affecting these children.

The successful completion of the survey owes much to the cooperation of individuals from public and private agencies who took time from their busy schedules to answer the lengthy questionnaire that crossed their desks. On the other hand, the findings present a less successful picture of national attempts to meet the undoubted problems involved in the education of migrant children. Again, the lack of clear-cut answers in a number of instances raises

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important questions concerning the attitudes of those primarily invested with the responsibility for education within their respective states.

Mechanics of the Survey

A five-part questionnaire was developed to delineate the number of migrant children in the given state, their participation in regular and summer terms, and the needs and problems connected with their classroom attendance. This questionnaire was sent to the departments of education in forty-eight states (Hawaii and Puerto Rico were not included in the survey), Protestant and Roman Catholic agencies active in migrant work in forty-one states, governors' committees dealing with migrant problems in twenty-four states, and citizens' committees having a like interest in ten states. In this way the forty-eight states were queried from one to four times, with a total of 130 persons being contacted.

Replies were received from at least one person in all but four of the forty-eight states for an over-all response of 60 per cent. However, eleven state departments of education did not acknowledge receipt of the questionnaire, twelve reported that they had no migrant problem, and seven more failed to complete the questionnaire for miscellaneous reasons. Thus thirty state departments of education are not represented in the final tabulations, although other agencies in many of these states did furnish important information.

What the Responses Showed

One of the purposes of the survey was to determine the number of migrant children annually entering and leaving each state, their pattern of movement, and the numbers enrolled at various class levels during the years, 1960-62.

This purpose was not realized. Few reports even gave estimates of the number of migrant children within state borders and less than one-third of the forty-four tabulated states supplied enrollment figures. A few states noted that "migrants" were not distinguished in any of their records.

The survey established that migrant children could be accepted for enrollment in regular terms in twenty-two states, and summer programs for migrant children were provided in eighteen states. But these positive reports of educational opportunity had to be somewhat qualified. Half of the summer terms were either wholly or partially underwritten by private agencies and received no support from state education departments. In most instances these privately supported schools could accommodate only a few of the migrant children in the state. One report listed an enrollment of thirteen pupils for the state for the year and in no state were more than 150 pupils involved. Two of these summer programs were for pre-schoolers only, and one was a pilot study. Two of the summer programs operated by state education departments in 1962 had to be discontinued in 1963 because of lack of appropriations.

The reports of regular term enrollment posed similar questions concerning the number of migrant children who actually participated in the school programs. A number of reports cited state compulsory attendance laws as assuring attendance but also noted that enforcement was left up to the school districts. In answer to a direct query, only seven states reported making any special effort to enroll migrant children. Most of these seven, however, went into detail concerning the necessity for their programs because of the tendency of migrant parents to undervalue education for their children and the lack of interest of the youngsters themselves, hampered as they were by language difficulties and age/grade retardation.

An important part of the survey was devoted to a determination of problems and needs usually associated with the education of migrant children. Respondents were given an opportunity to list problems, as they were most frequently encountered, and to evaluate the importance of twelve categories of needs, ranging from reimbursement of school districts for migrant children to interest and cooperation of migrant parents. Suggestions as to possible action to meet the special conditions affecting migrant childrens' education were also sought. This section which measured opinion rather than fact drew more replies than any other part of the survey, suggesting perhaps that most respondents usually had a concern or a point of view.

More than 124 problems were enumerated, including such various obstacles to educating the migrant child as lack of funds for Spanish-speaking teachers, feelings of insecurity in the child engendered by transiency, economic deprivation and cultural differences, attitudes of teachers, of parents, of communities, and lack of materials appropriate to the degree of age/grade retardation usually encountered. Most reports cited mobility as the chief problem, frequently linking it to the difficulty of fitting the ill-prepared, transient child into the classroom.

When the respondents evaluated the twelve needs listed in the questionnaire, they showed strong agreement as to the three most important categories. The reimbursement of school districts for migrant children enrolled in regular or special term schools, community understanding and concern for the problem of educating the migrant child, and a special program to enroll migrant children in summer schools were the needs rated as most important. Needs which were reported of least importance, sometimes not being rated at all, were as significant to the survey-makers as the most frequently mentioned categories, since these needs are essentially intrinsic to any educational program that really

gets and keeps the migrant child in school. These infrequently rated needs were: information on the development of educational programs adapted to the needs of migrant children, orientation of staff and teachers to these needs, and the regulation of child labor in agriculture outside of school hours.

If the enumerated problems and evaluated needs seemed to indicate a tendency on the part of many respondents to see the migrant child as a disturbing element in the classroom and someone else's problem — the legislature's, to appropriate more funds or the community's,to have more concern — the lack of suggestions for action to meet these conditions seemed only to substantiate the impression.

Summary — A Guide for Action

A national survey on the education of migrant children, based on reports from forty-four states, established that few agencies knew how many such children entered or left their state or kept statistics on their progress through school. Most respondents recognized that migrant children were retarded in achievement and suffered from the mobility of their parents, but they were also unsure of or indifferent to the steps that could be taken to improve educational opportunities for this disadvantaged group.

And disadvantaged the migrant child certainly is. Moving from district to district, he is frequently untouched by attendance laws, unwelcomed in the classroom where his presence creates many and difficult problems for the teacher, and ignored by his classmates because of his lack of a social awareness comparable to their own. Often Spanish-speaking, he finds few bilingual teachers when he travels and seldom encounters a counselor to encourage or motivate him toward an education. Retarded in grade from two to three years, a retardation increasing

with his age, the migrant child becomes an early school dropout. Unprotected by child labor laws, he takes his place beside his parents, working to add to the family income and becoming in time another cipher in health and welfare statistics.

Because of the escalating social, economic, and human costs represented by the uneducated migrant child, ways must be found as quickly as possible to provide him with the basic educational skills necessary in a rapidly changing nation.

The National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children was established to give support and impetus to this movement for improving the educational opportunities open to these children. It is in a position to counsel with state agencies, to encourage interstate cooperation, to make available through its clearinghouse the best and most recent information on tested methods and techniques useful in teaching migrant children, to serve as a liaison with federal agencies, and to create at the national level a climate of opinion that will give support to community concern and action.

The NCEMC survey reflects a failure in many areas, but it also offers a positive contribution to action by defining where American education for the migrant child stands today.

October 22, 1963